

Because we want to know *why* things happen, arguments about cause are both numerous and important to us. We begin asking why at a young age, pestering adults with questions such as "Why is the sky blue?" and "Why is the grass green?" And, to make sense of our world, we try our hand at explanations as youngsters, deciding that the first-grade bully is "a bad boy." The bully's teacher, however, will seek a more complex explanation because an understanding of the causes is the place to start to guide the bully to more socially acceptable behavior.

As adults we continue the search for answers. We want to understand past events: Why was President Kennedy assassinated? We want to explain current situations: Why do so many college students binge drink? And of course we also want to predict the future: Will the economy improve if there is a tax cut? All three questions seek a causal explanation, including the last one. If you answer the last question with a yes, you are claiming that a tax cut is a cause of economic improvement.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CAUSAL ARGUMENTS

Causal arguments vary not only in subject matter but in structure. Here are the four most typical patterns:

### One cause produces one effect.

Dissolve zinc in sulfuric acid → zinc sulfate forms

### One cause leads to several effects.

Heavy TV viewing → increase in stereotyping  
→ decrease in time spent reading  
→ decrease in sensitivity to violence  
→ increase in junk food eating

### One effect is the result of several causes.

Less reading assigned → Lower SAT scores  
Less writing assigned →  
Simplifying of textbooks →

### Several causes form a chain of causes leading to a final effect.

The desire for more land for farming → decision to cut  
down trees → more carbon dioxide trapped in Earth's  
atmosphere → one cause of current climate changes.

These models lead to several key points about causal arguments:

- **Most causal arguments are highly complex.** Except for some simple chemical reactions, most arguments about cause are difficult, can involve many steps, and are often open to challenge. Even arguments based in science lead to shrill exchanges. While scientists seek genetic markers for obesity, others argue that obesity is a result of a lack of willpower. Think, then, how much more open to debate are arguments about the worldwide economic downturn or arguments about human behavior. Many people think that “it’s obvious” that violent TV and video games lead to more aggressive behavior as well as a loss of horror in the face of violence. And yet, psychologists, in study after study, have not demonstrated conclusively that there is a clear causal connection. One way to challenge this causal argument is to point to the majority of people who do not perform violent acts even though they have watched television and played video games while growing up.
- **Because of the multiple and intertwined patterns of causation in many complex situations, the best causal arguments keep focused on their purpose.** For example, you are concerned with global warming. Cows contribute to global warming. Are we going to stop cattle farming? Not likely. Factories contribute to global warming. Are we going to tear down factories? Not likely—but we can demand that smokestacks have filters to reduce harmful emissions. Focus your argument on the causes that readers are most likely to accept because they are most likely to accept the action that the causes imply.
- **Learn and use the specific terms and concepts that provide useful guides to thinking about cause.** First, when looking for the cause of an event, we look for an *agent*—a person, situation, another event that led to the effect. For example, a lit cigarette dropped in a bed caused the house fire—the lit cigarette is the agent. But why, we ask, did someone drop a lit cigarette on a bed? The person, old and ill, took a sleeping pill and dropped the cigarette when he fell asleep. Where do we stop in the chain of causes?  
 Second, most events do not occur in a vacuum with a single cause. There are *conditions* surrounding the event. The man’s age and health were conditions. Third, we can also look for *influences*. The sleeping pill certainly influenced the man to drop the cigarette. Some conditions and influences may qualify as *remote causes*. *Proximate causes* are more immediate, usually closer in time to the event or situation. The man’s dozing off is a proximate cause of the fire. Finally, we come to the *precipitating cause*, the triggering event—in our example, the cigarette’s igniting the combustible mattress fabric. Sometimes we are interested primarily in the precipitating cause; in other situations, we need to go further back to find the remote causes or conditions that are responsible for what has occurred.
- **Be alert to the difference between cause and correlation.** First, be certain that you can defend your pattern of cause and effect as genuine causation, not as correlation only. Married people are better off financially, are healthier, and report happier sex lives than singles or cohabiting couples.



Is this a correlation only? Or, does marriage itself produce these effects? Linda Waite is one sociologist who argues that marriage is the cause. Another example: Girls who participate in after-school activities are much less likely to get pregnant. Are the activities a cause? Probably not. But there are surely conditions and influences that have led to both the decision to participate in activities and the decision not to become pregnant.

### An Example of Causal Complexity: Lincoln's Election and the Start of the Civil War

If Stephen Douglas had won the 1860 presidential election instead of Abraham Lincoln, would the Civil War have been avoided? An interesting question posed to various American history professors and others, including Waite Rawls, president of the Museum of the Confederacy. Their responses were part of an article that appeared in the *Washington Post* on November 7, 2010.

Obviously, this is a question that cannot be answered, but it led Rawls to discuss the sequence of causes leading to the breakout of the war. Rawls organizes his brief causal analysis around a great metaphor: the building and filling and then lighting of a keg of powder. Let's look at his analysis.

#### Existing Conditions

"The wood for the keg was shaped by the inability of the founding fathers to solve the two big problems of state sovereignty and slavery in the shaping of the Constitution."

#### More Recent Influences

1. "[T]he economics of taxes and the politics of control of the westward expansion were added to those two original issues as the keg was filled with powder."
2. "By the time of the creation of the Republican Party in 1856, the powder keg was almost full and waiting for a fuse. And the election of any candidate from the Republican Party—a purely sectional party—put the fuse in the powder keg, and the Deep South states seceded. But there was still no war."

#### Proximate Causes

"Two simultaneous mistakes in judgment brought the matches out of the pocket—the Deep South mistakenly thought that Lincoln, now elected, would not enforce the Union, and Lincoln mistakenly thought that the general population of the South would not follow the leadership" of the Deep South states.

#### Precipitating Causes

1. "Lincoln struck the match when he called the bluff of the South Carolinians and attempted to reinforce Fort Sumter, but that match could have gone out without an explosion."

## SECTION 3 STUDYING SOME ARGUMENTS BY GENRE

2. "Lincoln struck a second, more fateful match, when he called for troops to put down the 'insurrection.' That forced the Upper South and Border States into a conflict that they had vainly attempted to avoid." (Reprinted by permission of Waite Rawls.)

Rawls concludes that the election of Lincoln did not start the war; it was only one step in a complex series of causes that led to America's bloodiest war. His analysis helps us see the complexity of cause/effect analysis.

### Mill's Methods for Investigating Causes

John Stuart Mill, a nineteenth-century British philosopher, explained in detail some important ways of investigating and demonstrating causal relationships: commonality, difference, and process of elimination. We can benefit in our study of cause by understanding and using his methods.

1. *Commonality.* One way to isolate cause is to demonstrate that one agent is *common* to similar outcomes. For instance, twenty-five employees attend a company luncheon. Late in the day, ten report to area hospitals, and another four complain the next day of having experienced vomiting the night before. Public health officials will soon want to know what these people ate for lunch. Different people during the same twelve-hour period had similar physical symptoms of food poisoning. The common factor may well have been the tuna salad they ate for lunch.
2. *Difference.* Another way to isolate cause is to recognize one key *difference*. If two situations are alike in every way but one, and the situations result in different outcomes, then the one way they differ must have caused the different outcome.  
 Studies in the social sciences are often based on the single-difference method. To test for the best teaching methods for math, an educator could set up an experiment with two classrooms similar in every way except that one class devotes fifteen minutes three days a week to instruction by drill. If the class receiving the drill scores much higher on a standard test given to both groups of students, the educator could argue that math drills make a measurable difference in learning math. But the educator should be prepared for skeptics to challenge the assertion of only one difference between the two classes. Could the teacher's attitude toward the drills also make a difference in student learning? If the differences in student scores are significant, the educator probably has a good argument, even though a teacher's attitude cannot be controlled in the experiment.
3. *Process of elimination.* One can develop a causal argument around a technique we all use for problem solving: *the process of elimination*. When something happens, we examine all possible causes and eliminate them, one by one, until we are satisfied that we have isolated the actual cause (or causes).

When the Federal Aviation Administration has to investigate a plane crash, it uses this process, exploring possible causes such as mechanical failure, weather, human error, or terrorism. Sometimes the process isolates

### EXERCISES

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more than one cause or points to a likely cause without providing absolute proof. You will see how Lester Thurow uses the process of elimination method in his argument at the end of this chapter (pp. 236–38).

### EXERCISE: Understanding Causal Patterns

From the following events or situations, select the one you know best and list as many conditions, influences, and causes—remote, proximate, precipitating—as you can think of. You may want to do this exercise with your class partner or in small groups. Be prepared to explain your causal pattern to the class.

1. Teen suicide
2. Global warming
3. Increase in the numbers of women elected to public office
4. High salaries of professional athletes
5. Increased interest in soccer in the United States
6. Comparatively low scores by U.S. students on international tests in math and science
7. Majority of undergraduates now women

### GUIDELINES for Analyzing Causal Arguments

When analyzing causal arguments, what should you look for? The basics of good argument apply to all arguments: a clear statement of claim, qualified if appropriate; a clear explanation of reasons and evidence; and enough relevant evidence to support the claim. How do we recognize these qualities in a causal argument? Use these points as guides to analyzing:

- **Does the writer carefully distinguish among types of causes?** Word choice is crucial. Is the argument that A and A alone caused B or that A was one of several contributing causes?
- **Does the writer recognize the complexity of causation and not rush to assert only one cause for a complex event or situation?** The credibility of an argument about cause is quickly lost if readers find the argument oversimplified.
- **Is the argument's claim clearly stated, with qualifications as appropriate?** If the writer wants to argue for one cause, not the only cause, of an event or situation, then the claim's wording must make this limited goal clear to readers. For example, one can perhaps build the case for heavy television viewing as one cause of stereotyping, loss of sensitivity to violence, and increased fearfulness. But we know that the home environment and neighborhood and school environments also do much to shape attitudes.
- **What reasons and evidence are given to support the argument?** Can you see the writer's pattern of development? Does the reasoning seem logical? Are the data relevant? This kind of analysis of the argument will help you evaluate it.

- **Does the argument demonstrate causality, not just a time relationship or correlation?** A causal argument needs to prove *agency*: A is the cause of B, not just something that happened before B or something that is present when B is present. March precedes April, but March does not cause April to arrive.
- **Does the writer present believable causal agents, agents consistent with our knowledge of human behavior and scientific laws?** Most educated people do not believe that personalities are shaped by astrological signs or that scientific laws are suspended in the Bermuda Triangle, allowing planes and ships to vanish or enter a fourth dimension.
- **What are the implications for accepting the causal argument?** If A and B clearly are the causes of C, and we don't want C to occur, then we presumably must do something about A and B—or at least we must do something about either A or B and see if reducing or eliminating one of the causes significantly reduces the incidence of C.
- **Is the argument convincing?** After analyzing the argument and answering the questions given in the previous points, you need to decide if, finally, the argument works.

## PREPARING A CAUSAL ARGUMENT

In addition to the guidelines for writing arguments presented in Chapter 4, you can use the following advice specific to writing causal arguments.

### Planning

1. **Think:** What are the focus and limits of your causal argument? Do you want to argue for one cause of an event or situation? Do you want to argue for several causes leading to an event or situation? Do you want to argue for a cause that others have overlooked? Do you want to show how one cause is common to several situations or events? Diagramming the relationship of cause to effect may help you see what you want to focus on.
2. **Think:** What reasons and evidence do you have to support your tentative claim? Consider what you already know that has led to your choice of topic. A brainstorming list may be helpful.
3. **Think:** How, then, do you want to word your claim? As we have discussed, wording is crucial in causal arguments. Review the discussion of characteristics of causal arguments if necessary.
4. **Reality check:** Do you have a claim worth defending in a paper? Will readers care?
5. **Think:** What, if any, additional evidence do you need to develop a convincing argument? You may need to do some reading or online searching to obtain data to strengthen your argument. Readers expect relevant, reliable, current statistics in most arguments about cause. Assess what you need and then think about what sources will provide the needed information.



6. **Think:** What assumptions (warrants) are you making in your causal reasoning? Are these assumptions logical? Will readers be likely to agree with your assumptions, or will you need to defend them as part of your argument? For example: One reason to defend the effects of heavy TV watching on viewers is the commonsense argument that what humans devote considerable time to will have a significant effect on their lives. Will your readers be prepared to accept this commonsense reasoning, or will they remain skeptical, looking for stronger evidence of a cause/effect relationship?

### Drafting

1. Begin with an opening paragraph or two that introduces your topic in an interesting way. Lester Thurow in "Why Women Are Paid Less Than Men" writes:

In the 40 years from 1939 to 1979 white women who work full time have with monotonous regularity made slightly less than 60 percent as much as white men. Why?

This opening establishes the topic and Thurow's purpose in examining causes. The statistics get the reader's attention.

2. Do not begin by announcing your subject. Avoid openers such as: In this essay I will explain the causes of teen vandalism.
3. Decide where to place your claim statement. You can conclude your opening paragraph with it, or you can place it in your conclusion, after you have shown readers how best to understand the causes of the issue you are examining. Thurow uses the second approach effectively in his essay.
4. Present reasons and evidence in an organized way. If you are examining a series of causes, beginning with background conditions and early influences, then your basic plan will be time sequence. Readers need to see the chain of causes unfolding. Use appropriate terms and transitional words to guide readers through each stage in the causal pattern. If you are arguing for an overlooked cause, begin with the causes that have been put forward and show what is flawed in each one. Then present and defend your explanation of cause. This process of elimination structure works well when readers are likely to know what other causes have been offered in the past. You can also use one of Mill's other two approaches, if one of them is relevant to your topic.
5. Address the issue of correlation rather than cause, if appropriate. After presenting the results of a study of marriage that reveals many benefits (emotional, physical, financial) of marriage, Linda Waite examines the question that she knows skeptical readers may have: Does marriage actually *cause* the benefits, or is the relationship one of *correlation* only—that is, the benefits of marriage just happen to come with being married; they are not caused by being married.
6. Conclude by discussing the implications of the causal pattern you have argued for, if appropriate. Lester Thurow ends by asserting that if he is

right about the cause of the gender pay gap, then there are two approaches society can take to remove the pay gap. If, in explaining the causes of teen vandalism, you see one cause as "group behavior," a gang looking for something to do, it then follows that you can advise young readers to stay out of gangs. Often with arguments about cause, there are personal or public policy implications in accepting the causal explanation.

### A CHECKLIST FOR REVISION

- ☐ Do I have a clear statement of my claim? Is it appropriately qualified and focused? Is it about an issue that matters?
- ☐ Have I organized my argument so that readers can see my pattern for examining cause?
- ☐ Have I used the language for discussing causes correctly, distinguishing among conditions and influences and remote and proximate causes? Have I selected the correct word—either *affect* or *effect*—as needed?
- ☐ Have I avoided the *post hoc* fallacy and the confusing of correlation and cause?
- ☐ Have I carefully examined my assumptions and convinced myself that they are reasonable and can be defended? Have I defended them when necessary to clarify and thus strengthen my argument?
- ☐ Have I found relevant facts and examples to support and develop my argument?
- ☐ Have I used the basic checklist for revision in Chapter 4 (see p. 105)?

## FOR ANALYSIS AND DEBATE

### WHY WOMEN ARE PAID LESS THAN MEN

LESTER C. THUROW

A professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management for more than forty years and a consultant to both government and private corporations, Lester C. Thurow has written extensively on economic and public policy issues. The latest of his more than a dozen books is *Fortune Favors the Bold: What We Must Do to Build a New and Lasting Global Prosperity* (2003). "Why Women Are Paid Less than Men," published in the *New York Times* (March 8, 1981), offers an explanation for the discrepancy between the incomes of men and women.

**PREREADING QUESTIONS** When he asks "why" at the end of paragraph 1, what kind of argument does Thurow signal he will develop? Were you aware that women earn less than men?

- 1 In the 40 years from 1939 to 1979 white women who work full time have with monotonous regularity made slightly less than 60 percent as much as white men. Why?



Over the same time period, minorities have made substantial progress in catching up with whites, with minority women making even more progress than minority men.

Black men now earn 72 percent as much as white men (up 16 percentage points since the mid-1950s) but black women earn 92 percent as much as white women. Hispanic men make 71 percent of what their white counterparts do, but Hispanic women make 82 percent as much as white women. As a result of their faster progress, fully employed black women make 75 percent as much as fully employed black men while Hispanic women earn 68 percent as much as Hispanic men.

This faster progress may, however, end when minority women finally catch up with white women. In the bible of the New Right, George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty*, the 60 percent is just one of Mother Nature's constants like the speed of light or the force of gravity.

Men are programmed to provide for their families economically while women are programmed to take care of their families emotionally and physically. As a result men put more effort into their jobs than women. The net result is a difference in work intensity that leads to that 40 percent gap in earnings. But there is no discrimination against women—only the biological facts of life.

The problem with this assertion is just that. It is an assertion with no evidence for it other than the fact that white women have made 60 percent as much as men for a long period of time.

"Discrimination against women" is an easy answer but it also has its problems as an adequate explanation. Why is discrimination against women not declining under the same social forces that are leading to a lessening of discrimination against minorities? In recent years women have made more use of the enforcement provisions of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission and the courts than minorities. Why do the laws that prohibit discrimination against women and minorities work for minorities but not for women?

When men discriminate against women, they run into a problem. To discriminate against women is to discriminate against your own wife and to lower your own family income. To prevent women from working is to force men to work more.

When whites discriminate against blacks, they can at least think that they are raising their own incomes. When men discriminate against women they have to know that they are lowering their own family income and increasing their own work effort.

While discrimination undoubtedly explains part of the male-female earnings differential, one has to believe that men are monumentally stupid or irrational to explain all of the earnings gap in terms of discrimination. There must be something else going on.

Back in 1939 it was possible to attribute the earnings gap to large differences in educational attainments. But the educational gap between men and women has been eliminated since World War II. It is no longer possible to use education as an explanation for the lower earnings of women.



- 12 Some observers have argued that women earn less money since they are less reliable workers who are more apt to leave the labor force. But it is difficult to maintain this position since women are less apt to quit one job to take another and as a result they tend to work as long, or longer, for any one employer. From any employer's perspective they are more reliable, not less reliable, than men.
- 13 Part of the answer is visible if you look at the lifetime earnings profile of men. Suppose that you are asked to predict which men in a group of 25-year-olds would become economically successful. At age 25 it is difficult to tell who will be economically successful and your predictions are apt to be highly inaccurate.
- 14 But suppose that you were asked to predict which men in a group of 35-year-olds would become economically successful. If you are successful at age 35 you are very likely to remain successful for the rest of your life. If you have not become economically successful by age 35, you are very unlikely to do so later.
- 15 The decade between 25 and 35 is when men either succeed or fail. It is the decade when lawyers become partners in the good firms, when business managers make it onto the "fast track," when academics get tenure at good universities, and when blue-collar workers find the job opportunities that will lead to training opportunities and the skills that will generate high earnings.
- 16 If there is any one decade when it pays to work hard and to be consistently in the labor force, it is the decade between 25 and 35. For those who succeed, earnings will rise rapidly. For those who fail, earnings will remain flat for the rest of their lives.
- 17 But the decade between 25 and 35 is precisely the decade when women are most apt to leave the labor force or become part-time workers to have children. When they do, the current system of promotion and skill acquisition will extract an enormous lifetime price.
- 18 This leaves essentially two avenues for equalizing male and female earnings.
- 19 Families where women who wish to have successful careers, compete with men, and achieve the same earnings should alter their family plans and have their children either before 25 or after 35. Or society can attempt to alter the existing promotion and skill acquisition system so that there is a longer time period in which both men and women can attempt to successfully enter the labor force.
- 20 Without some combination of these two factors, a substantial fraction of the male-female earnings differentials are apt to persist for the next 40 years, even if discrimination against women is eliminated.

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**QUESTIONS FOR READING**

1. What situation is the subject of Thurow's argument?
2. Briefly explain why Thurow rejects each of the possible explanations that he covers.
3. What is the author's explanation for the discrepancy between the earnings of white women and white men?

**QUESTIONS FOR REASONING AND ANALYSIS**

4. What question should you ask about Thurow's numbers? Do you know the answer to the question?
5. What is Thurow's claim?
6. What evidence does the author provide for his claim? Is it convincing?
7. What strategy for determining cause does Thurow use?

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND WRITING**

8. Do you agree that most people who are going to be successful are so by age 35? Can you think of people who did not become successful until after 35? Is this the kind of assumption that can create its own reality?
9. Evaluate the two solutions Thurow proposes. Do they follow logically from his causal analysis?
10. Thurow's figures are based on the total earnings of workers; they are not comparisons by job category. What are other facts about jobs that men and women hold that may account for some of the discrepancy in pay?

**HOW IMMIGRANTS CREATE MORE JOBS | TYLER COWEN**

Tyler Cowen is a professor of economics at George Mason University and at the Center for the Study of Public Choice. Cowen writes a daily blog under the heading "The Marginal Revolution" and is the author of both professional and popular articles. One of his more than a dozen books is *Create Your Own Economy: The Path to Prosperity in a Disordered World* (2009). The following article appeared October 31, 2010, in the *New York Times*.

**PREREADING QUESTIONS** The usual "wisdom" is that immigrants take jobs away from Americans. Are you eager to read Cowen's essay and consider another perspective? Why or why not?

In the campaign season now drawing to a close [2010], immigration and globalization have often been described as economic threats. The truth, however, is more complex.

- 2 Over all, it turns out that the continuing arrival of immigrants to American shores is encouraging business activity here, thereby producing more jobs, according to a new study. Its authors argue that the easier it is to find cheap immigrant labor at home, the less likely that production will relocate offshore.
- 3 The study, "Immigration, Offshoring and American Jobs," was written by two economics professors—Gianmarco I. P. Ottaviano of Bocconi University in Italy and Giovanni Peri of the University of California, Davis—along with Greg C. Wright, a Ph.D. candidate at Davis.
- 4 The study notes that when companies move production offshore, they pull away not only low-wage jobs but also many related jobs, which can include high-skilled managers, tech repairmen and others. But hiring immigrants even for low-wage jobs helps keep many kinds of jobs in the United States, the authors say. In fact, when immigration is rising as a share of employment in an economic sector, offshoring tends to be falling, and vice versa, the study found.
- 5 In other words, immigrants may be competing more with offshored workers than with other laborers in America.
- 6 American economic sectors with much exposure to immigration fared better in employment growth than more insulated sectors, even for low-skilled labor, the authors found. It's hard to prove cause and effect in these studies, or to measure all relevant variables precisely, but at the very least, the evidence in this study doesn't offer much support for the popular bias against immigration, and globalization more generally.
- 7 We see the job-creating benefits of trade and immigration every day, even if we don't always recognize them. As other papers by Professor Peri have shown, low-skilled immigrants usually fill gaps in American labor markets and generally enhance domestic business prospects rather than destroy jobs; this occurs because of an important phenomenon, the presence of what are known as "complementary" workers, namely those who add value to the work of others. An immigrant will often take a job as a construction worker, a drywall installer or a taxi driver, for example, while a native-born worker may end up being promoted to supervisor. And as immigrants succeed here, they help the United States develop strong business and social networks with the rest of the world, making it easier for us to do business with India, Brazil and most other countries, again creating more jobs.
- 8 For all the talk of the dangers of offshoring, there is a related trend that we might call in-shoring. Dell or Apple computers may be assembled overseas, for example, but those products aid many American businesses at home and allow them to expand here. A cheap call center in India can encourage a company to open up more branches to sell its products in the United States.
- 9 Those are further examples of how some laborers can complement others; it's not all about one group of people taking jobs from another. Job creation and destruction are so intertwined that, over all, the authors find no statistically verifiable connection between offshoring and net creation of American jobs.
- 10 We're all worried about unemployment, but the problem is usually rooted in macroeconomic conditions, not in immigration or offshoring. (According to a Pew study, the number of illegal immigrants from the Caribbean and Latin





Hispanic workers at a construction site.

America fell 22 percent from 2007 to 2009; their departure has not had much effect on the weak United States job market.) Remember, too, that each immigrant consumes products sold here, therefore also helping to create jobs.

When it comes to immigration, positive-sum thinking is too often absent<sup>11</sup> in public discourse these days. Debates on immigration and labor markets reflect some common human cognitive failings—namely, that we are quicker to vilify groups of different “others” than we are to blame impersonal forces.

Consider the fears that foreign competition, offshoring and immigration<sup>12</sup> have destroyed large numbers of American jobs. In reality, more workers have probably been displaced by machines—as happens every time computer software eliminates a task formerly performed by a clerical worker. Yet we know that machines and computers do the economy far more good than harm and that they create more jobs than they destroy.

Nonetheless, we find it hard to transfer this attitude to our dealings with<sup>13</sup> immigrants, no matter how logically similar “cost-saving machines” and “cost-saving foreign labor” may be in their economic effects. Similarly, tariffs or other protectionist measures aimed at foreign nations have a certain populist appeal, even though their economic effects may be roughly the same as those caused by a natural disaster that closes shipping lanes or chokes off a domestic harbor.

As a nation, we spend far too much time and energy worrying about<sup>14</sup> foreigners. We also end up with more combative international relations with our economic partners, like Mexico and China, than reason can justify. In turn, they are more economically suspicious of us than they ought to be, which cements a negative dynamic into place.

The current skepticism has deadlocked prospects for immigration reform,<sup>15</sup> even though no one is particularly happy with the status quo. Against that

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trend, we should be looking to immigration as a creative force in our economic favor. Allowing in more immigrants, skilled and unskilled, wouldn't just create jobs. It could increase tax revenue, help finance Social Security, bring new home buyers and improve the business environment.

- 16 The world economy will most likely grow more open, and we should be prepared to compete. That means recognizing the benefits—including the employment benefits—that immigrants bring to this country.

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## QUESTIONS FOR READING

1. What is the occasion for Cowen's article—what is he responding to?
2. What does Cowen think we can conclude—as a minimum—from the recent study on immigration?
3. What is the role of "complementary" workers?
4. What is the relationship between "offshoring" and the gain or loss of American jobs?
5. Explain "positive-sum thinking."
6. What has probably cost more American jobs than either immigration or globalization?

## QUESTIONS FOR REASONING AND ANALYSIS

7. What is Cowen's claim? Where does he state it?
8. What *kinds* of evidence does the author provide to support his claim?
9. In what sense is Cowen's argument a refutation? What passages present the views with which he objects?
10. What is Cowen's tone throughout his argument? How does this influence reader response?

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND WRITING

11. What information or ideas most surprised you in this argument? Why?
12. Has Cowen convinced you possibly to change your thinking about immigrant workers and globalization as they affect American jobs? Why or why not? If you disagree with Cowen's analysis, how would you refute him?